

**Governor's P-20 Council
Graduation Rate Project Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 26, 2006
10:30 a.m.
Meeting Minutes**

Location: 1700 W. Washington, Arizona Department of Commerce; 6th Floor Conference Room

P-20 Members Present: Dr. Sybil Francis, Chair, Dr. Jim Zaharis, Dr. David Curd, Cindy Rudrud

Others: Dr. David Garcia, Dr. Karen Butterfield, Brian Mathieson, Michael Curd, Lorie O'Brien, Cheri St. Arnauld

Staff: Debra Raeder

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Chair Dr. Sybil Francis called the meeting to order and invited those present to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2005

There being no discussion on or corrections to the Committee minutes of October 6, 2005, Dr. David Garcia moved approval of the minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Dr. David Curd and unanimously approved.

3. Discussion – Action Plan – NGA Graduation Rate Compact

a. Implementing a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate using a standard definition.

The Committee discussed the initial steps needed to begin the process to ensure that Arizona will meet this requirement. The Committee agreed that the first step would be to obtain, in writing, from Superintendent Horne the graduation definition currently being used in Arizona, and if it meets the same definition as the NGA Graduation Rate Compact. The Compact definition is that the Graduation rate = $[\text{on-time graduates in year } x] \div [(\text{first-time entering ninth graders in year } x - 4) \div (\text{transfers in}) - (\text{transfers out})]$. There was also concern raised that the U.S. Department of Education may be looking at a new regulation for calculating graduation rates that differs from the Compact. Dr. Butterfield provided a copy of a letter to Chief State School Officers indicating that the Department of Education's is looking at a rate that will be calculated by taking the average size of state enrollments in the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades and comparing that to the number of graduates four years later. The letter to Superintendent Horne should address this issue also.

Additionally, staff needs to clarify the use of the term “any given summer” in NGA recommendation 1.

b. Leading efforts to improve state data collection;

This effort involves ensuring that the system can collect, analyze and report the adopted indicators and other important information, as well as a student-unit-record data system, with unique student identifiers that can track students through the state’s education system from kindergarten through postsecondary education. The Committee agreed that Arizona is accomplishing some of this work with the implementation of SAIS. Dr. Jim Zaharis recommended that the foundation for this effort build off of the 10 points in *Creating a Longitudinal Data System* as prepared by Achieve. Debra will provide this information to the Committee for their review and future discussion.

c. Implementing additional indicators that provide more information;

The Committee agreed that the letter to Superintendent Horne should also request information on what additional indicators are currently being utilized in Arizona. Does the state already provide data that includes a five year cohort graduation rates, a college-ready graduation rate, a dropout rate, a completion rate for those earning alternative completion credential, in grade retention rates and percentages of students who have not graduated but are still in school or who have completed course requirements but failed a state exam required for graduation.

The Committee also expressed concern about the term “college readiness” and the need for everyone to have the same understanding of its meaning.

d. Annually reporting progress on the improvement of high school graduation, completion, and dropout rate data.

Additionally the compact ask Governors to develop public understanding about the need for good graduation and dropout rate data and to collaborate with local education leaders, higher education leaders, business leaders, and leaders of local community organization to help build important political and public will. The Committee felt that a great deal of this work is currently being done by the Center for the Future of Arizona. Also, some of this work should dovetail with the work of the P-20 Alignment Committee and recommendations for reforming secondary education that should ultimately result in improving Arizona’s graduation rates.

At this time, the Committee did not address the requirement for annually reporting progress to NGA on these goals.

4. Update – Alignment Project

Debra Raeder provided an update to the Committee on the Alignment Project Report. The Alignment Project Committee has received an overview of the Report and will receive a draft copy of the Report on Friday, January 27, 2006. The Committee will provide comment to Public Works on or before February 2, 2006. The final report will be presented to the P-20 Council at the February 16, 2006 meeting.

The emphasis of the report was to look at five major industries that have been targeted in Arizona where job growth or development will be occurring, and identify occupations within these industries that meet a defined high-wage, high-demand/high-growth standard and then to identify specific skills, education and training needed for these occupations. This information was then validated with industry focus groups. In tandem with this work, Public Works did an analysis on the preparedness of Arizona's high school students for postsecondary study and the workplace focusing on the adequacy of academic preparation and articulation with requirements for post secondary study. The major findings of the Report are that Arizona's secondary system is not well aligned with the requirement for post-secondary study and the workplace, and that Arizona high school academic and graduation requirements are not sufficient to equip all students with the necessary skills and knowledge for success.

5. Next Steps

a. Update – Adolescent Literacy report

Debra indicated that the Adolescent Literacy Committee would begin working on the Adolescent Literacy Report prepared by the Alliance for Excellent Education and presented to the P-20 Council at the December 6th meeting. As indicated in the report, a primary indicator of whether a student will graduate from high school is their ability to read. Some of the work the Adolescent Literacy Committee will be addressing will probably overlap with the work of the Graduation Rate Project Committee.

b. Future meeting with Adolescent Literacy Committee

Given the above information, it may be helpful for the Graduation Rate Project Committee to have a joint meeting with the Adolescent Literacy Committee to address issues and work that may overlap. Debra will send out a meeting matrix to ascertain a mutually convenient meeting time and date.

c. Other

The Committee briefly discussed other issues and information needed that could impact the work on the NGA Graduation Compact initiatives such as:

- The need to understand what assessments tests are being utilized by community colleges and universities;
- could the high school exit exam become the college entrance exam;

- what type of data are currently being collected by community colleges e.g. how many students need remediation and in what areas; where do these students come from; completion rates, etc.;
- the need to support high school reform initiatives such as Arizona Scholars Programs so that more students exit high school ready for college.
- The need to begin drafting a report to the P-20 Council addressing each of the recommendations of the NGA Report

The Committee again briefly discussed the term “college ready” and should the term “college eligible” be used instead.

The Committee is also interested in studying how other states have successfully implemented these types of initiatives.

The Committee reiterated it’s next action items:

1. Prepare letter to Superintendent Horne to address the NGA Compact and Arizona’s current definition for computing graduation rates; what additional indicators are being collected; as well as clarification on the USDOE discussion on a graduation rate definition;
2. Clarification from NGA on the term “any given summer” for computing graduation rates as well as concern over the vagueness regarding ELL students;
3. That staff provide the Committee with the 10 points in Creating a Longitudinal Data System as prepared by Achieve, Inc.;
4. That future agenda items include review of the Alignment Report; discussion on a college-ready graduation rate; information on how other states have or are implementing various aspects of the Compact;
5. Begin drafting a report to the P-20 Council addressing each of the 5 recommendations of the NGA Compact.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 11:30 a.m.